Koviloor Acadamy

THE PARTING OF THE WAYS

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BY

JAWAHARLAL NEHRU

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FOREWORD

BY

MAHATMA GANDHI

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FOREWORD

"In the mind and heart of India there was a conflict. There was an intense dislike of fascism and nazism and no desire to see them win. If India could but be convinced that this war was being fought for a new world order, for real freedom, then indeed India would throw all her weight and strength into it. But imperialism and we were old acquaintances, very old, with many generations of contact. We knew each other, suspected each other, and disliked each other thoroughly. There was this background of one hundred and eighty years of hostility, of exploitation, of bitterness, of promises unfulfilled, of disruptive and reactionary movements encouraged, and attempts to break up the national unity of India. It was no easy matter for us to get over these tremendous hurdles, or remove the complexes that had grown up. Yet we said we would do it, but we could not even attempt it unless a great phychological shock was given to the people, a pleasant shock, which would suddenly change the air of India and get rid of fears and complexes. That pleasant shock could only come by an unequivocal declaration of independence and immediate steps to give effect to the popular will in the carrying on of the administration. Unless this was done, no man in India, no group, could make the people move in the direction of willing association with the War. Wars today require mass support and even authoritarian countries have to whip up their people by ceaseless propaganda. No war can be fought effectively by a professional army in an atmosphere of public ill-will or indifference. So even from the narrower point of view of organising India's defence or India's participation in the war effort, a popular representative government was essential. Imperialism can coerce; it cannot win public approval and goodwill."

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"I repeat that it is incorrect to say that there is any new parting of the ways, for our ways never lay together. But this declaration of the British Government means the final breaking of such slender bonds as held our minds together, it means the ending of all hope that we shall ever march together. I am sorry, for in spite of my hostility to British imperialism and all imperialisms, I have loved much that was England, and I should have liked to keep the silken bonds of the spirit bet-

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ween India and England. Those bonds can only exist in freedom. I wanted India's freedom for India's sake of course; but I also wanted it for England's sake. That hope is shattered and fate seems to have fashioned a different future for us. The way of co-operation is not for us; the hundred year old hostility will remain and grow in future conflicts, and the breach when it comes, as come it must, will also not be in friendship but in hostility."

* * * * *

"The British Government says it will not coerce an important group to impose a system of government which this does not like. The alternative surely is that it will coerce other groups who want that particular system of government. What exactly has the function of the British Government been, and what is it today, in India? It is to coerce the Indian people as a whole, every group, in order to maintain its own hold and special position. It is to suppress Indian industry in favour of British industry in India. It is to maintain an army of occupation whose chief function is to coerce the Indian people. It is to uphold Indian Princes by coercing their subjects into submission. It is strange to be told that the British Government does not want to use coercion. What else does it do in India?"

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"That is the goal of India—a united, free, democratic country, closely associated in a world federation with other free nations. We want independence, but not the old type of narrow, exclusive independence. We believe that the day of separate warring national State is over."

"The Parting Of the Ways" should have appeared when it was finished, i.e., immediately after 10th August. By some mischance it has escaped publication till now. It has just come into my possession. I understand that some portions of the article have already appeared in "Asia." I think it is too precious a document to be withheld from the public. I have shown it to Dr. Rajendra Prasad and Acharya Kripalani who are in Wardha. They agree with me that it should be published on behalf of the A.I.C.C. I know that Sarojini Devi if she was here would also agree. I believe that it correctly represents in moderate though forcible language the Congress position.

The passages quoted above are key paragraphs. The first extract shows what might have been. The second declares

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the author's love for the British people. The third shows in the fewest possible words how the British Government in India is sustained by coercion pure and simple. The fourth paragraph shows that the independence India wants is neither exclusive nor antagonistic to any nation.

Though the author has said not one word about non-violence, he has led the reader to the inevitable conclusion that the Independence of Jawaharlal's conception, nay, Congress conception cannot be won except through unadulterated non-violence and the present struggle is an attempt to keep the spirit of non-violence alive in the midst of the fratricidal inhuman carnage. If it is a contribution to India's freedom it is no less contribution to world peace.

Sevagram, Wardha,
16-3-1941.

M. K. GANDHI.

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THE PARTING OF THE WAYS

To say that anything has happened in India which leads to a parting of the ways as between Britain and India is incorrect. For their ways have been separate as they were bound to be, so long as England was the dominating imperialist Power and India was subject to her will. Such a relation could only be based on coercion and coercion cannot lead to a marching together hand in hand. It can only lead to the dominant party chaining and pulling the other and dragging it against its will or to a breaking of this chain.

So our ways have lain in different directions and a continuous tug of war has resulted; sometimes the conflict has been psychological and wordy, sometimes it has been rebellious. In 1857 a bloody rebellion took place and it was suppressed in a ghastly manner. The conflict continued, bitter and persistent, though it was not so obvious on the surface. It took shape in the organisation of the National movement, which spoke softly for a while and then its voice grew harder as it came to represent the real feelings of the people. Another rebellion against the dominating authority took shape, a peaceful one, discarding all methods of violence, but more powerful and widespread than any previous one. The hundreds of millions of India, weary of their long subjection and poverty and exploitation, shed their fear and looking the dominating imperialism in the face, demanded freedom.

There were many ups and downs, and much suffering and sorrow came to these millions, but there was no looking back for them. The conflict continued in various ways and, meanwhile, the world rushed towards the abyss of self-destruction. India's problem began to be viewed in a larger perspective and in relation to the difficulties that encompassed the world. Though our vision became broader and deeper, and though it tried to peep into the future, yet the problem remained essentially one of Indian nationalism versus British Imperialism. India's freedom and independence were the pre-requisites for us in order to play our part in the larger world. And in that larger world also, it seemed to us a sham and a mockery to talk of freedom and democracy, and yet hold on to imperialism.

Fascism and nazism were anathema to us and the horrors of Central Europe produced a powerful reaction on India. Yet we remembered, how can we ever forget? the horrors we had witnessed in India. Yet we saw and felt, to the innermost core of our being, the day to day humiliation of our own people. We were not wise or clever enough to understand that though fascism and nazism were definitely bad, imperialism was not so bad after all!

War came in Europe and we discovered that India had also been declared a belligerent country, without so much as a formal reference or intimation to any representatives of the people of India. The Congress might be considered an unofficial organisation, but there was the Central Assembly, there were the Provincial Governments enjoying, it was said, provincial autonomy. None of these was told or asked for its opinion.

The air resounded with loud cries invoking freedom and asserting the sanctity of democracy. They sounded good. But we had heard these

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cries so often before and experienced for ourselves the aftermath. We could not be easily swept away; we were cautious, doubly so because of the way in which the War had been imposed upon us, despite our repeated warnings. Was this freedom and democracy meant for us also, or only for the favoured mortals who lived in Europe and its extensions? Did it mean that imperialism would go from here and elsewhere?

We inquired from the British Government and asked to be enlightened, so that we might know what course we should pursue. Our inquiries were considered irrelevant and impertinent. Yet the answers that they gave indicated sufficiently clearly that there was no intention and, so far as they were concerned, no possibility of the ending of the imperialist structure in India, no question of power being transferred to the people's representatives. The National Congress had not asked anything for itself. It wanted no job in high places, which it could have had even without asking for them. It wanted a declaration of independence for India and a Constituent Assembly, elected by the people, to frame the constitution of a free India, with full safeguards for the protection of all minority rights.

In the mind and heart of India there was a conflict. There was an intense dislike of fascism and nazism and no desire to see them win. If India could but be convinced that this War was being fought for a new world order, for real freedom, then indeed India would throw all her weight and strength into it. But imperialism and we were old acquaintances, very old, with many generations of contact. We knew each other, suspected each other, and disliked each other thoroughly. There was this background of one hundred and eighty years of hostility, of exploitation, of bitterness, of promises unfulfilled, of disruptive and reactionary movements encouraged, and attempts to break up the national unity of India. It was no easy matter for us to get over these tremendous hurdles, or remove the complexes that had grown up. Yet we said we would do it, but we could not even attempt it unless a great psychological shock was given to the people, a pleasant shock, which would suddenly change the air of India and get rid of fears and complexes. That pleasant shock could only come by an unequivocal declaration of independence and immediate steps to give effect to the popular will in the carrying on of the administration. Unless this was done, no man in India, no group, could make the people move in the direction of willing association with the War.

Wars today require mass support and even authoritarian countries have to whip up their people by ceaseless propaganda. No war can be fought effectively by a professional army in an atmosphere of public illwill or indifference. So even from the narrower point of view of organising India's defence or India's participation in the war effort, a popular representative government was essential. Imperialism can coerce; it cannot win public approval and goodwill.

The Viceroy and the British Government said NO to us, and our course seemed to be clear. The Congress Governments in the Provinces resigned, and parliamentary government in these Provinces ceased, because it was not prepared to submit to the British Government's fiat against the wishes of the people it represented. It was the old conflict between King and Parliament taking a new shape; the Viceroy and the Governors represented the King's Veto, our elected assemblies the will of the people. In western Europe this conflict had raged hundreds of years ago and resulted in establishing the

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authority of Parliament A king lost his head in the process in England; another king also lost his head in France. In America a proud and freedom-loving people resisted the authority of a distant king and his ministers and, after a long struggle, established their own freedom.

But in India, in the twentieth century, on the eve of the new order that was promised, in the face of loud declarations in favour of freedom and democracy, in India, parliamentary government, such as it existed in the Provinces, was suspended. The Viceroy's authority was supreme; he could make laws and unmake them, tax people and coerce them without the slightest reference to any representative body.

The Congress Ministries had resigned, it is true, though they had the great majority of the members of the Assemblies behind them. They resigned because they could not accept the Viceroy's mandates or the British Government's policy. But the Assemblies were still there. The Viceroy or the Governors could have dissolved them and had a fresh election. But they knew well that such an election would result in an overwhelming majority in favour of the Congress Governments that had resigned. No other Ministry was possible as it could not command a majority. So the only course was for the Provincial Assemblies to be suspended, no fresh elections, and the Viceroy and Governors to exercise dictatorial powers. It was a clear case of conflict between the people and parliament on the one side and the King's representatives on the other. One party had to be suppressed or to give in. Parliament was suppressed. It was as if Mr. Neville Chamberlain, unable to carry Parliament with him, had advised the King to suspend it and to rule by decree; or President Roosevelt, in a like predicament, were to ignore the House of Representatives and the Senate and constitute himself the dictator. We hear a great deal about authoritarianism and dictators and England's chiefs condemn both in resonant and forcible language. Yet in India today there is full-blooded dictatorship and authoritarianism.

Our course was clear. Yet we restrained and held ourselves, even though many amongst us were indignant with us, even though many colleagues of ours found their way to prisons for the offence of explaining our policy to the people. We were hesitant because we hoped against hope that England's Government, including some progressive and labour elements, might, in this hour of supreme trial, shake itself out of its deadening imperialism, and act according to its professions. We had no desire to encourage the Nazi rulers in any way; the thought of their domination over Europe and elsewhere was a painful one. We who had suffered as a subject people knew well what this would mean for others. We, of all people, could not tolerate the racial views and racial oppression of the Nazis. The horror that enveloped Holland and Belgium, the supreme tragedy of France deeply moved us. The imminent peril of England made us feel that we should not add to her difficulties and embarrassments. Though England's ruling classes may have treated us badly and her imperialism may have crushed us, we had no illwill for her people, who were bravely facing peril and extreme danger. We tried hard to find a way out honourable and advantageous to both India and England. We made new proposals, even going beyond our own mandate given at the last sessions of the Congress at Ramgarh. We pledged ourselves for the organisation of Indian defence and help in the war effort. But we could only do so as free people, with the

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goodwill and co-operation of India's millions. That freedom must be declared and a provisional national government formed, which would represent not one party only but various important elements. The fundamental basis for this proposal was the recognition that the imperialist structure had to go.

The Viceroy and the British Government have said a final NO to us and to India. On the eve of the French collapse, Britain's rulers were unorthodox enough to propose a union of England and France. That was an astonishing proposal. It came too late. But it showed that the British Government had got out of the ruts and could take a big step if the situation demanded it. But where their own interests are so vitally concerned as in India, they still live in the ruts and not all the shock of war and danger has taken them out. Even an obvious advantage in this War cannot make them give up the special position that imperialism has conferred upon them. They talk complacently still of their Empire and of their desire to maintain it, forgetting perhaps that the word, which sounds so good to them, is a symbol to us of our own subjection, degradation and poverty.

I repeat that it is incorrect to say that there is any new parting of the ways, for our ways never lay together. But this declaration of the British Government means the final breaking of such slender bonds as held our minds together, it means the ending of all hope that we shall ever march together. I am sorry, for in spite of my hostility to British imperialism and all imperialisms, I have loved much that was England, and I should have liked to keep the silken bonds of the spirit between India and England. Those bonds can only exist in freedom. I wanted India's freedom for India's sake of course; but I also wanted it for England's sake. That hope is shattered and fate seems to have fashioned a different future for us. The way of co-operation is not for us; the hundred year old hostility will remain and grow in future conflicts, and the breach when it comes, as come it must, will also not be in friendship but in hostility.

I am told that the British Government has been led to believe that we shall tamely submit to their decrees because so far we have been quiescent. Our very restraint appears to have made them think that we were incapable of any action. In this world of force, of bombing aeroplanes, tanks, and armed men, how weak we are. Why trouble about us? But perhaps, even in this world of armed conflict. there is such a thing as the spirit of man, and the spirit of a nation, which is neither ignoble nor weak, and which may not be ignored, save at peril.

To those of us who are intimately connected with Indian politics, the British Government's reply needs no analysis or clarification. To do them justice, it is clear enough and there is no ambiguity. Yet others perhaps might miss its significance and be misled by the use of resounding words into thinking that something worthwhile was offered, that the people of India were getting some power in her government.

It is proposed to appoint some non-official Indians to the Viceroy's Executive Council. This Council is no real Executive or Cabinet; it is merely advisory. Real power rests with the Viceroy who does not always take members of his Council into his confidence. They are heads of departments, advising the Viceroy about their special sub-

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jects. All policy emanates from the Viceroy. In fact his is the responsibility, and he is answerable to the Secretary of State for India in the British Parliament. If this legal, constitutional and conventional structure remains, it makes little difference who or how many people are added to the Council. They do not make an atom of difference to the Viceroy's position, power or authority, except in so far as they might try to influence him by their powers of persuasion.

Apart from this, the addition of a few non-officials to the Executive Council does not make an essential difference to it; the majority continues to be of the nominated official and service members, who may have their virtues (which are not very obvious) but who represent the hundred per cent. imperialistic bureaucratic type. They are completely dependent on the Viceroy for their position and are obsequious to him. They are wholly cut off from the life, thought and activities of the people, and live in an official world of their own. Such efficiency as they have consists in running the old type of police State. They are remote from the modern world and its problems and do not understand them. They belong to an order which has passed elsewhere and which must pass in India.

Then again the so-called "representative Indians" who may be appointed to the Viceroy's Executive Council will be chosen presumably from all manner of odd groups, some completely reactionary. All of them will not even represent the progressive elements in India, and in the Council, they will either neutralise each other or make matters worse. They will not be elected by the people in any way and will not be responsible to them. They will be chosen by the Viceroy in their individual capacity.

It is obvious that the addition of these few odd Indians to the Viceroy's Executive Council means less than nothing from any national point of view, or from the view point of any power being transferred to the people.

The second proposal is the creation of a War Advisory Council composed of an odd assortment of people, including some representatives of the semi-feudal Indian States. This will meet from time to time, apparently to listen to good advice and to act as recruiting sergeants and the like. They will have no executive power of any kind or indeed any other power. It will be just a show body of no relevance or importance.

These are the two proposals for the present and, as the Viceroy has made perfectly clear, the British Government do not contemplate the transfer of any power or responsibility. Further it has been stated by the Secretary of State for India that when he refers to "the principal elements in India's national life," he includes the European vested interests in India. Probably the conception of India's "national" life that Mr. Amery and the Viceroy cherish is one which consists chiefly of British vested interests, Indian feudal Princes, big landlords, communalists and other reactionaries. According to them, these "national" interests form the wrap and woof of our national life and deserve protection and representation. The three or four hundred odd millions of people who live and labour and often starve are an excrescence.

So much for the present and so long as the war lasts. The golden future of our dreams, that new order of freedom of which we

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hear so much, is envisaged as follows. After conclusion of the War, "a body representative of the principal elements in India's national life" will be set up to devise the frame-work of the new Constitution. We have seen what, in the opinion of Mr. Amery and the Viceroy, these elements in India's national life are. We shall have (or so it is proposed, but destiny may dispose otherwise) a noble company of bejewelled Maharajahs, belted knights, European industrial and commercial magnates, big landlords and Talukdars, Indian industrialists, representatives of the imperial services, and a few commoner mortals, all sitting together, possibly under the presidentship of the Viceroy himself, drawing up India's constitution. Thus will India exercise her right to self-determination. It will be a pretty pattern that this assembly will produce, with a flower for every vested interest and feudal relic and with the background of British imperialism. Above all British interests, which are so important a part of India's national life, will have been preserved and given their rightful due. We shall call this Dominion Status so that every one may be pleased.

But let it not be forgotten that even this assembly cannot have it all its own way. The British Government cannot divest itself of its high responsibility to protect British vested interests whatever happens. So whatever this assembly decides must be "subject to the due fulfilment of the obligations which Great Britain's long connection with India has imposed upon her and for which His Majesty's Government cannot divest themselves of responsibility."

Meanwhile, it is suggested that the Government will welcome every sincere and practical step taken by representative Indians to reach a basis of friendly agreement on the form that the post-war representative body should take and the principles and outlines of the constitution. These representative Indians must of course come from the principal elements of India's national life as outlined above.

If some of us in the outer darkness do not approve of this pattern or fancy this picture, it is no doubt our misfortune. If we wonder sometimes how any British Government can presume to make this offer to the Indian people in this age of change and revolution, when empires are disappearing, and the old structure collapses all over the world, it must indicate how simple and naive we are. We ought to have known that imperialisms do not abdicate; they hold on even when it is manifest folly to endeavour to do so. But in our simplicity we cannot help feeling a mild surprise at the fact that leaders of the British Labour Party, those champions of freedom and socialism, should be responsible for this 'offer' to India. But it is no offer. It is a decision announced and going to be imposed upon us whether we like it or not.

The Congress had ventured to suggest another way—that the Constitution should be framed by a Constituent Assembly elected by adult franchise by the people. This had the misfortune of being a democratic way and of giving an equal importance to each individual. It is true that "the principal elements of India's national life," as conceived by the Viceroy and the Secretary of State, might have found some difficulty in getting elected. Democratic elections are not always just to these important elements, like those representing British or Indian vested interests.

The Viceroy has further stated that: "It goes without saying that they (the British Government) could not contemplate the trans-

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fer of their present responsibilities for the peace and welfare of India to any system of government whose authority is directly denied by large and powerful elements in India's national life. Nor could they be parties to the coercion of such elements into submission to such a government."

This statement is worthy of close consideration. It is obvious that any system of government that might be proposed for India will find many odd groups and interests opposed to it. No system can possibly be devised which will be acceptable to all these groups and interests and of the four hundred millions of India. Every agrarian legislation has to deal with the inherent conflicts between the landlord and the tenant; every labour legislation is looked upon with disfavour by the captains of industry. Even among industrialists in India, there is continuing conflict between British vested interests and the rising Indian industry which has been deliberately prevented from expanding so that the former might not suffer. So the conflicts of interests run through the whole of national life as it is constituted today, because there are different classes with conflicting interests. Some of us would like to have a classless society and I have no doubt that it will ultimately come. Meanwhile the only known method of resolving these conflicts, other than that of force and coercion, is the democratic method. If any group can hold up a political or economic change, even though this is desired by the great majority, this must lead to a disruption of the State and possibly to civil conflict.

The British Government's statement means that there can be no far-reaching political or economic changes, for some group is bound to object to them. Even if no Indian group objects, British vested interests will do so. But there are Indian reactionary groups that will play that role. This means that the status quo will largely remain to the great advantage of British imperialism. This is the way to perpetuate the present order, to make India safe for British vested interests.

The idea that the British Government should be asked to coerce any group is absurd. No one has ever hinted at this, except the reactionaries and communalists who want the coercion of the progressive elements. The British Government is asked to put an end to all its present coercion; in fact to retire from the Indian scene as a government. Only then will conditions be produced in India which will induce various elements in India to seek a basis of agreement among themselves, for the alternative is civil war. So long as the British Government remains, it plays off one against the other, and produces an unhealthy desire in the minds of some to seek its favour as against their own compatriots.

The British Government says it will not coerce an important group to impose a system of government which this does not like. The alternative surely is that it will coerce other groups who want that particular system of government. What exactly has the function of the British Government been, and what is it today, in India? It is to coerce the Indian people as a whole, every group, in order to maintain its own hold and special position. It is to suppress Indian industry in favour of British industry in India. It is to maintain an army of occupation whose chief function is to coerce the Indian people. It is to uphold Indian Princes by coercing their subjects into submission. It is strange to be told that the British Government does not want to use coercion. What else does it do in India?

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Again, how is one to tell that an important group does not want a particular system of government? Ordinarily that group votes, and other groups vote, and then it is possible to know what the feeling or intentions of various groups are. They come to a mutual arrangement, trying to find some common measure of agreement, or, unhappily, they do not and there is conflict.

The British proposal is ideally suited to prevent any progress or major change. Even British interests will bar the way. As a matter of fact the Government have gone further and stated that in any event they are not going to divest themselves of responsibility for the protection of these interests. Whatever happens, these interests remain; and so, whatever happens, the British financial and industrial structure dominates India. It so happens that this is exactly what we want to get rid of. There is no progress or lessening of India's appalling poverty till we succeed in this. All else is secondary.

We have an intimate glimpse from the Viceroy's statement of the blessings of Dominion Status that is held out to us as a lure. Many of us, I fear, are not attracted by this picture.

It may be said that the Viceroy's statement about not coercing any large element which disapproves of a system of government applies chiefly to the religious minorities. Certainly let us agree that there must be no such coercion, and the British Government must on no account do it. Nor should others. But where does coercion come in? Who suggests it?

The Congress proposal was not that the Congress or any party or religious group should be given power. It asked for power for the Indian people as a whole, and wanted the Indian people to decide what they wanted in a democratic manner. It went further, in its desire to protect all minority interests. It agreed to separate electorates for such minorities as desired it, and laid down that matters relating to minority rights must not be settled by a majority vote. They must be settled by agreement or, if unhappily this is not possible in regard to any particular matter, through an impartial tribunal. It is difficult to conceive any more comprehensive or effective method for minority protection, short of throwing overboard all pretence at democracy and establishing a dictatorship of the minority.

So far as the Muslims in India are concerned, they are only technically a minority. They are vast in numbers and powerful in other ways and it is patent that they cannot be coerced against their will, (just as the Hindus cannot be coerced against their will). If the two cannot agree as organised groups, it will be unfortunate for India and no one can say what the consequence will be. But let us always remember that in political and economic matters people do not function as religious groups. The lines of cleavage are different.

The real question of minority protection arises for others, who are neither Hindu nor Muslim. It seems amazing to me that any Indian, whether he is a Hindu, Muslim, Sikh, Christian or belongs to any other faith, should seek protection against his own compatriots from a foreign authority. As a matter of fact they do not, except a few, who do it not because of religion but because of vested interests.

Let us be clear about it. This communal question is essentially one of protection of vested interests and religion has always been a

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useful stalking horse for this purpose. Those who have feudal privileges and vested interests fear change and become the camp followers of British imperialism. The British Government, on the other hand delights in using the communal argument to deny freedom, democracy or any major change, and to hold on to power and privilege in India. That is the raison d'être and the justification of communalism in India. Some one has recently rightly called the Indian Princes Britain's Fifth Column in India. Communalism and its champions might well be included in this column of present day disrepute. It is not surprising, therefore, that communalists and Princes get on well together and co-operate with each other. They have a common purpose to serve—to obstruct India's freedom so that vested interests might flourish.

It is not of course enough to dispose of communalism by this simple analysis, although this is the basic explanation. There are so many other factors and it is perfectly true that mass elements, who may be affected by communalism, have neither vested interests to preserve nor have they any love for British imperialism. To understand how they have been influenced by communalism, and have often acted against their own interests, is to understand how Hitler came to influence mass elements among the German people. The analogy is not complete but it helps. People are swept away by slogans which appeal to them and then they are used for entirely different purposes. There has been a strange similarity in the recent development of the communal technique in India to Nazi methods.

Communalism began in India by a demand for a specified share in services and in representation in the legislatures. It has now developed into an openly anti-national, anti-democratic movement, hinting at the partition of India. For a long while it had no constructive or any other programme. It lived on invective, violence and general offensiveness. It is amazing how it vulgarised our public life. It discovered that what it had valued most in the past—separate electroates—brought little good. In fact they weakened a minority group. Then by the very force of the logic of hatred and separation that it had pursued, it had to go to the extreme of demanding a partition of India. The medieval theory of religious groups constituting a political community, which collapsed before an advancing nationalism in Europe, was revived. An idea similar to that of the Crusades, of Christendom versus Islam, suddenly appeared (it is said with British inspiration) in India. It was an astonishing throw back. Whoever else benefitted or suffered from it, it was clear that British imperialism was the gainer.

It is curious that even in early and medieval India, this theory never functioned in the western way. Other religions were welcomed and accommodated. The early Christians came in the first century and found a home. Jews were accommodated, Muslims were welcome to spread their religion and settle down (till invasion brought political conflicts), Parsis came and were absorbed. Later Muslim rulers thought in terms of building up a single nation of the Muslim newcomers and the Hindus and others. The great Akbar laid the foundations for this. The new cultural elements were absorbed and a common culture gradually developed, especially in northern India.

And now we are told to go back to the pre-Akbar days, to reverse the process of history, to think in terms of medievalism. When

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nationalism is giving place to internationalism, and even narrower creed than nationalism is advanced, and this finds favour and protection with our British rulers. When the world is groping blindly towards a real federation of nations, it is suggested that India should be split up into various parts.

Muslim countries—Turkey, Egypt, Iraq, Syria, Persia—have long discarded this medieval theory. They are intensely nationalist and are proud of their ancient culture. Some of them deliberately go to their pre-Islamic days to find cultural inspiration. The Chinese Muslims are proud of their Chinese culture and fight for China's freedom. That is the course of history. Indeed it is a course that has already been run, and the mighty revolution that is taking place in the world today will lay down another course—the way to world federation based on national freedom and a juster economic system. Privilege and vested interest will have to go.

That is the goal of India—a united, free, democratic country, closely associated in a world federation with other free nations. We want independence, but not the old type of narrow, exclusive independence. We believe that the day of separate warring national States is over.

We want independence and not dominion or any other status. Every thinking person knows that the whole conception of dominion status belongs to past history; it has no future. It cannot survive this War, whatever the result of this War. But whether it survives or not we want none of it. We do not want to be bound down to a group of nations which has dominated and exploited over us; we will not be in an empire in some parts of which we are treated as helots and where racialism runs riot. We want to cut adrift from the financial domination of the City of London. We want to be completely free with no reservations or exceptions, except such as we ourselves approve, in common with others, in order to join a Federation of Nations, or a new World Order. If this new World Order or Federation does not come in the near future we should like to be closely associated in a federation with our neighbours—China, Burma, Ceylon, Afghanistan, Persia. We are prepared to take risks and face dangers. We do not want the so-called protection of the British army or navy. We shall shift for ourselves.

If the past had not been there to bear witness, the present would have made us come to this final decision. For even in this present of war and peril, there is no change in the manner of treatment accorded to our people by British imperialism. Let those who seek the favour and protection of this imperialism go its way. We go ours. The parting of the ways has come.

Allahabad,
10th August, 1940.

JAWAHARLAL NEHRU.

Koviloor Acadamy

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